



A European State of Mind: **Duty in Europe**

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# All HANDS

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The

Agony  
of  
Ecstasy





*Left*— The Galleria in Naples, Italy, one of the world's first indoor shopping malls, is also one of the many buildings where Sailors can see the elaborate architecture that can be found everywhere in Europe.

# E





*Above* — On his second tour to Sicily, AD2 Franklin Varela, of AIMD power plants division, Naval Air Station Sigonella, loves being stationed in Europe.


# Duty in Europe

**W**hether it's for travel, family ties or career enhancement, accepting orders to one of the Navy's European locations can be rewarding at many levels. From England to Italy and Spain to Greece, these opportunities are there to be had; no matter where you serve.

*All Hands* took a look at just a couple of the Navy's prime European duty stations, and discovered positive attitudes and improved quality of service abound.



# European State of Mind



**T**HE NAVY USED TO BE TOUTED AS AN “ADVENTURE”, then it was a “journey”, and now young people are prompted to “accelerate their lives” in the sea service. No matter how you look at it, a tour of duty in Europe will provide all three of

these elements, and more, if it is approached with the right attitude.


Much like first joining the military, which required a certain amount of mental preparation and understanding, the same is needed when considering orders to one of the Navy’s European billets. The different cultures will certainly require adjustment. The new locations will absolutely necessitate familiarization, and the languages will demand attention.

Duty in Europe could be a bad day in boot



The old world charm, as seen in Vietri, is symbolic of the many small towns that pepper the Italian coast. These are popular destinations for many Sailors and their families.

## Leave Your Shoes at the Gate



**T**HERE IS SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR THAT “NEW” feeling, like the one felt in a new car with its unblemished shine and very distinguished smell. With new things, reminders of how near and dear they are to their owners are often seen and heard. How many times can a vehicle be washed in one day? Do people really have to leave the plastic on lampshades? And when will mom let folks sit on the new furniture?

At bases across Europe, Sailors and their families

are experiencing that “new” feeling, as shiny and bright naval facilities rise amid the Old World’s historic and ancient architecture.

The re-capitalization effort does not include that special floral scent hanging from a mirror, but rather provides an attractive host-country blend and local consideration for buildings that instantly invite users to a warm, fuzzy inside.

That warm, fuzzy feeling comes with a hefty price tag, but by all accounts, it’s money well-spent and more importantly it’s mission essential.

The Navy in Europe has shifted its philosophies of whole project management and financing.





camp if you're not in the right frame of mind, but it can also be the best time of your life and a cherished experience if you are properly prepared.

First and foremost, you need to be in a European state of mind. That is, completely accept and buy into the fact that Europe is not (*I repeat*) is not America, nor can it ever be expected to be "your" version of the United States. You will not always get your food, your television, your commercial goods, your music, etc. While the Navy strives to provide these things overseas, you cannot change the host country you are in and its affects, good and bad, on your lifestyle. All the compromising

**Left** – The new courtyard on Naval Support Activity Naples may look empty during working hours, but at the end of the day, Sailors come to the serene area to eat at the "Ciao Hall," visit the gym or shop at the exchange.

**Right** – Many local companies have received construction contracts on the naval bases of Europe. An Italian worker lays down tar on the roof of the new hospital at the Gricignano Support Site near Naples.

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Instead of spreading construction dollars across the board, with a little going to each installation, plans call for large amounts of money going toward a single location for improvements on a grand scale.

"There is a focused capital improvement program that concentrates on one base at a time," said CDR Jeffrey Lamberson of the Commander, Fleet Air Mediterranean (COMFAIRMED) Facilities Staff. "This allows us to avoid a patchwork approach and supports our strategy of readiness, reduced cost, consolidated functions, more efficient infrastructure and improved quality of life."



The Navy areas included in the European re-capitalization are: Naval Support Activity (NSA) Souda Bay, Crete, with its new construction already completed; NSA Naples, Italy, which is near completion; and Naval Air Station (NAS) Sigonella, Sicily, that is just getting started. Future programs call for improvements at Naval Station Rota, Spain, and NSA Gaeta, Italy, with a



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and adaptation will have to come on your part.

### Choosing Europe

"There are two types of Sailors who choose duty in Europe," said Force Master Chief Marty Kidder, of Commander, Fleet Air Mediterranean (COMFAIRMED). "They make an educated choice to see Europe, travel, experience the culture and maybe even [discover] their family heritage. Others make a calculated career decision."

No matter what motivates your choice, the master chief advises Sailors to take Europe for "all it has to offer ... then go back to sea, even though you may be up for shore duty."

This advice has important undertones as he said many European duty locations are being changed in category from Type 3 shore duty (counts as sea) to Type 6 preferred shore duty. So why go to Europe if it counts roughly the same as the states but it's clearly different? Kidder said,



**Above** — Both serving as command sponsors, YN2 Jeffrey Heisler, of Navy Element Naples, and his wife, Pandora, carry groceries into a new housing unit for the Dungan family. As new families arrive in Naples, they are immediately moved into available units at the Gricignano Support Site.

**Below** — Alisha Killingsworth, a freshman at Naples American High School, practices running hurdles at the new DODDs learning institution's track and field facility. Alisha enjoys being on a track team and traveling to sports events around Italy and Europe. "The competition is good, and I get to go places like Vicenza."



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possible consolidation at NSA La Maddalena, Italy.

"We are moving away from single-story, single function buildings," said Lamberson. "Especially given the limited real estate, such as in Naples, we are stacking elements together. No longer is the exchange divided into different locations for lawn & garden and toys, for example." He added that the consolidations are not only cost and energy efficient, but generally, more convenient to the user.

At NSA Naples, or Capodichino (Capo) as it is known, convenience translates into park the car

and walk because the buildings are intimately close on the very limited 56 acres. "Capodichino is a walking base, so, it made sense to create an Italian village where Sailors can live and work," said Lamberson. Capo's major facelift is part of the ongoing Naples Improvement Initiative (NII).

According to COMFAIRMED Facilities Staff sources, the construction at Capo will cost \$258



"This duty can be rewarding at many levels and can still be a positive move toward a well-rounded career."

In fact, he said it's hard to get some service members to move on and leave after their initial tour. Maybe that's because from the moment they arrive, Sailors and their families are made to feel welcome.

### First Impressions

From a stocked fridge in Keflavik, Iceland, to hot meals waiting in Naples, Italy, sponsors are making a big difference in

how Sailors and their families first view their new European home. "We want them to feel important and part of the team; to say, 'They really wanted me here,'" said Kidder of a theater-wide sponsor program initiative. "It's not that sponsorship is new in the Navy, but commands in Europe have elevated it to a higher standard. It's the little things that count, that extra mile."

For Pandora Heisler, that meant baking homemade lasagna for the Dungan family, who she and her husband, Yeoman 2nd Class Jeffrey Heisler, of Navy Element Naples, Italy, were sponsoring. "I know how exhausted we were," recalled Pandora. "I

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**Right** — Five-year-old Caila Dungan enjoys one of her favorite books, which came in her family's express shipment only two days after they arrived in Naples, Italy. Having the comforts of home in a timely manner helps families, like the Dungan's, adjust to living in Europe.



million, is 85 percent complete, started in 1988 and is scheduled to be completed in FY03. Its key quality of life projects include: a state-of-the-art gymnasium and Olympic-size swimming pool, two 1-plus-1 style bachelor quarters (BQ), a movie theater, a library, a chapel, a child development center (CDC) and a food court. The third and final BQ project has been awarded and construction should be finished in FY03, bringing the total number of new BQ rooms to 294. (There will be 294 1+1 modules, so they are capable of doubling them up to make

room for 588 Sailors. Current policy, though, has E-5 and above with their own room.)

Also part of NII, the U.S. Navy Support Site at Gricignano (20 minutes from NSA Naples) is being accomplished via an innovative lease-construct contract for \$440 million and is 65

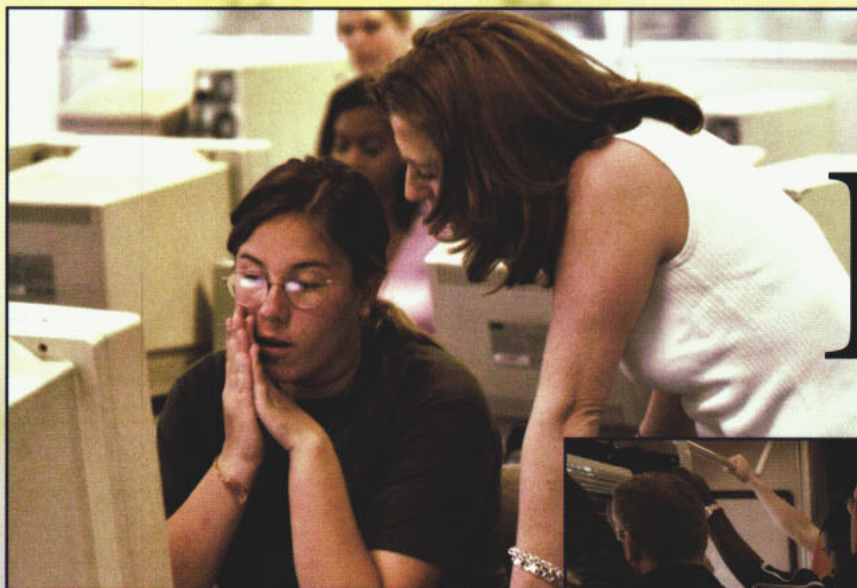


didn't want them to have to worry about anything that first night." Before the Dungans even arrived, the Heislars set up their new on-base housing unit with temporary furniture, linens, and pots and pans. They even tracked down their express shipment.

"Sponsors play a big part in the first 24 hours," exclaimed Personnelman 1st Class (AW) Charles Dungan, after being on terra firma Italy for all of two days. "My chief even came out to the terminal

to meet us." He and his family – wife Schonna, 5-year-old daughter Caila and 4-year-old son Thomas – had been on the road for over six weeks between leave and PCSing.

Transferring to any duty station is an ordeal, but crossing many time zones make European moves that much more tiring. "I'm ready to crash," sighed Schonna, almost too tired to talk. But still, she managed to express her excitement of finally arriving in Italy.



**Above** – A teacher at Naples American High School helps a sophomore at one of the many computers students have ample access to. Being able to e-mail friends stateside and surf the Web helps teens adjust to life in Italy.

**Right** – The Inter-Cultural Relations Class teaches Sailors and their families things that the local nationals take for granted – like how to buy a train ticket.



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percent complete. The work there began in 1995 and will be done in FY04. New facilities already in place include 876 family housing units, a high school and elementary school, another CDC, recreation fields and a housing welcome center.

A village forum is currently under construction which includes a Navy Lodge, chapel, library, youth center and restaurant. It is scheduled to open in FY02. A new medical and dental facility is also under construction and will be completed later that year as well.

With more than two-thirds complete, families at the support site are reaping the rewards of living new now. Alisha Killingsworth, a freshman at the new high school, practices her 110- and 300-yard hurdles on a new track. "I like the school." She says the new building and being in Italy "gives you something. You have bragging rights."

Like excited new homeowners, the Dungan family, who had just arrived in Italy and received one of Gricignano's new housing units, can't believe how nice they really are. "We didn't expect



"Hello?! When are we going to get here again?! I hear it costs about \$20 for a tour bus to Rome. I'm going to Rome!"

### Overcoming the expected and unexpected

Getting to Roma, and elsewhere around Europe, is explained to Sailors during their Inter-Cultural Relations (ICR) program. Each ICR varies according to the area in Europe it serves and focuses on local living and customs. Folks arriving in Napoli

receive two days of classroom information on basic language, security, personal safety, money, and food. They also get a two-day field trip downtown, where they are taught how to use public transportation, shown a few of the historic sites, exposed to markets and restaurants, and given some general history of the region.

"Volcanoes make me nervous," commented Cryptologic Technician Seaman Recruit Sarah Haggerty, while gazing across the Bay of Naples at the looming Mt. Vesuvius during her ICR



*Left* – The fresh fish from the open air markets of Naples is a major source of income for the people of the harbor city.

*Right* – At the fishing docks, Sailors can see the heart of the Neapolitan society. Here, a local fisherman repairs his nets after a long day on the water.



them to be so big. They're really big," exclaimed wife and mother Schonna Dungan. She likes the private balcony off the kitchen and the enclosed courtyard just outside the apartment door. "It will be great for the kids to play in on rainy days."

With so many projects on such a large scale, you might think some of the aesthetic details would be lost. Not so, according to Ralph Luca, the director of NII. "We wanted it to be modern, but we didn't want the Italian flavor to be lost," said Luca, who is an American of Italian descent. "We didn't want to lose the

flavor of the host country and its culture."

That local taste meant including a center piazza surrounded by the command administration buildings and the galley appropriately named the Ciao Hall. Tree-lined walks and nostalgic street lights add to the base's small town ambiance.

He said that the whole concept of rebuilding in Naples was triggered some years ago by Navy officials concern of seismic



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trip. Still, the Fresno, Calif., native assigned to NSGA Capo was rightly impressed. "Whoa! It's pretty cool to be here. I want to save money, go on tours and send videos to mom."

Playing back the tapes she records before mailing them home could be a problem if she doesn't have the right VCR or TV. Televisions in Europe operate on a different

signal (PAL) than in the United States, which uses an NTSC signal. Along with a different voltage, 220 volts, European electronics are just one of the things Sailors and their families must adapt to.

For Mess Management Specialist Seaman

**Right** – The Inter-Cultural Relations Class is a great way for Sailors, and their spouses, to learn the basics of European life.



**Left** – With many different signs and traffic habits to watch for, driving in Italy can be stressful. DM2(SW/AW) France Briand, of NAS Sigonella's public affairs office, keeps a sharp eye on the road as she navigates the busy streets of Catania, Sicily.

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activity in the region, especially in Agnano, where old support facilities, such as the exchange and hospital, are situated inside a large volcanic crater. The Navy already relinquished a good portion of its Agnano installation when new buildings became ready. Plans call for the old site to be vacated by 2005.

To relocate support assets to Gricignano and more operations to Capo, the Navy had to lease quite a bit more land (200 acres), but only enough as to be "reasonable to the taxpayer." An arrange-

ment was developed, which called for the Navy to start paying rent to the Italian developer only when the contractors completed new facilities. This required a lot of negotiation and effort all the way to Congress, said Luca. "In the end, the Navy saves money."

According to Luca, the savings didn't come without some local hitches. Twice, Italian authorities, who were concerned about the developer's land acquisition and the discovery of ancient artifacts, stopped NII at the support site.



Apprentice Blaine Garver, of Naval Support Activity Naples bachelor quarters staff, that means viewing her favorite soap, *"Young & Restless,"* on a local station. "It's pretty weird," she says of watching it in Italian, but she is able to follow it. "It helps me learn the language." However, service members and their families don't have to suffer through watching their TV shows or listening to music in a foreign tongue, as American Forces Network broadcasts television and radio programming at many locations throughout the European theater.

Of her first year in Italy, Garver says she misses her family

and that it was tough at first to adjust, not only to her first duty station in the Navy, but also being overseas. "I get a lot of packages, letters and pictures from home, and I make a lot of morale calls (DSN access to stateside phone service that significantly reduces the cost of making a call to the states).

### Talking the talk

Speaking Italian, Spanish, Greek or the queen's English seems to be one of the biggest problems to tackle. "Being away from home and not knowing the language was the hardest thing,"

In the bustling metropolis of Naples, billboards advertising everything from the latest movie to the oldest wine, are plastered to the sides of buildings.



He added that there has also been much cooperation and collaboration with Italians, especially in the development and construction of the new steel-framed hospital. "There was a learning curve" to get local contractors to use U.S. seismic and building safety codes. "But we used Italian materials. Two cultures have been working together, and we have a strong commitment from the Italians."

Living and working amid the Italian architecture suits

Chicago-native Builder Constructionman Marshawn Jackson just fine. Assigned to NSA Naples Public Works [also getting a new building at Capo], he likes the room he shares with one roommate in BEQ II at Capodichino. "It was originally 'the Q' to be in," he brags with a new owner tone. His quarters are equipped with a full bath and a kitchenette that has a microwave and refrigerator. It is also furnished with a recliner.

Living in luxury as well in new barracks is Mess Specialist



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recalls Carrie Feliciano, originally from Bremerton, Wash. "At first, I didn't know anything, except beans – fagoli (pronounced fah-sho-lee). But once you get used to it, it's time to go."

She and her family – husband, Aviation Boatswain's Mate 2nd Class Michael Feliciano of Naval Air Station II Fire Dept at Sigonella, Sicily, their 18-month-old son, Andrew, and 5-year-old daughter, Alyson, are finishing up a two-and-a-half-year tour on the southern Italian island.

Despite a language barrier, which she overcame better than mom and dad at times, Alyson thought, "Italy was beautiful. I liked the playgrounds." The Felicianos saw more than monkey bars and swings, traveling to Italy's mainland and touring the gorgeous Amalfi Coast. Now, they are trying to "squeeze in as much as possible" before they leave for their next duty at Whidbey Island, Wash. But Carrie vowed, "We plan on coming back [to Europe] after our next tour."



Walking through the crowded streets, Sailors can see what day-to-day life is like for an Italian in the busy port city of Naples.

## Leave Your Shoes at the Gate

Seaman Blaine Garver, from Virginia Beach, Va., who is assigned to the BQ staff at Capo. She says her 1-plus-1 room "works out well. We get along. It's like having a roommate, but having privacy at the same time," noted Garver of the separate rooms that share a bathroom in between. "Sometimes we bump into each other if we both have to get ready at the same time, but otherwise, it works."

Garver has made her room home, displaying her slight bovine fetish throughout her large quar-

ters. "I have a passion for cows."

Unlike its metropolitan cousin, livestock fit right in the rural countryside that surrounds NAS Sigonella, and its re-capitalization reflects that looks. Known as "the hub of the Med," the naval air station's construction plan is called SIG 2.1.

LCDR Dodd Naiser, the program's management officer explained the project's naming. "We liken it to software. We began in the year 2000 with SIG (Sigonella Improvement Gameplan) 2.0.





Others are already on their second tour in Europe, like Aviation Machinist's Mate 2nd Class Franklin Varela, assigned to AIMD Power Plants division at NAS Sigonella. Serving first in Italy from 1993-97, he and his family got their choice to return a year-and-a-half ago. "We love Europe. There's been no bad experiences," he remarked. That's not to say there weren't adjustments to be made by the Varelas. He said they miss not having the big chain discount stores and home improvement warehouses around, especially on returning this second time. Still, he says he'd take "overseas in a heart

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**Above** – Sailors often will decorate their homes with pottery from the many shops in the Naples area.

**Right** – Sea urchins are not a delicacy in Spain. However, they are traditionally found on almost every street corner in Cadiz during pre-Carnival festivities. Cadiz, only 20 minutes from U.S. Naval Station Rota, is the second most popular city in Spain to visit during Carnival – rivaled only by Tenerife in the Canary Islands. Spaniards typically dare, or even double dare, their friends to try the salty, gooey and very slimy insides of the spined creature. The sea urchin is eaten like a clam – only with a bit more caution – and tastes like slimy salt water.



Photo by JOC Jon McMillan

**Bottom Right** – Spanish men and women typically dress up in traditional Andalusian outfits for annual spring and summer fairs. These *caballeros* and *senoritas* are at the *Feria del Caballo*, or Horse Fair, held every May in Jerez de la Frontera – the town that gives its name to sherry. Jerez is located 30 minutes from U.S. Naval Station Rota.



Photo by PHILAWI Ronald Heppner



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beat" over duty in America.

The conveniences of home, that we take for granted, are often missed. In Italy only two days and the Dungans have already discovered that their electrical service is not as reliable as it was in the United States. However, the Housing Self-Help program provides items that makes life easier. "We're glad we get free light bulbs [from the Self-Help program]," added Dungan.

### Drive, shop and eat

Driving can be another major adjustment. Coming to Naples, Chicago-native Builder Constructionman Marshawn Jackson said he had to learn to drive all over again, despite his past big city experience. But now, he drives "like a Neapolitan."

When he returns to America, Jackson, will bring an additional new skill with him – the art of shopping. "I haggled and haggled," he happily recalled,



Duty in Europe affords Sailors a once in a lifetime opportunity to see historic and wonderous landmarks, such as the Vatican in Rome.

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A year later, we have the 2.1 version." In total, Sigonella's facelift will cost \$570 million, and will rebuild four-fifths of NAS I and two-thirds of NAS II – the two areas that comprise base facilities outside the city of Catania.

"Buildings will have tile roofs and earth tones to blend into the local landscape," Naiser said. "The chapel altar even looks toward Mount Etna [the island's active volcano]." He said its placement was given aesthetic consideration for this reason. He added that NAS II, like Capo, would have a

plaza feel with a central walk and parking all around the perimeter, leaving the fence line clear of buildings. "This was not only done for consolidation, but also for anti-terrorism and force protection concerns."

Naiser added that construction on such a large scale has long-lasting benefits, including immediate energy savings and reduced long-term maintenance costs. "For example, by building everything across the board, we purchase one type of heating and AC unit. This means in the future, we only have to



of a fancy Turkish rug he purchased. "At first, I was afraid to shop out in town, and I basically stuck to the Navy Exchange. But now, I'm out there!" He added, that once you know a few key words, it's easy. "I use sign language... there's always a lot of hands moving."

One of the other benefits of duty in Europe is trying the various cuisines that are special to each culture. In Rota, Spain,

for example, tapa hopping is a popular past time for Spaniards and Americans alike. Tapas are traditional bite-size- portions of an endless variety of Spanish foods and are usually served with a drink. There are hundreds of tapa bars around Rota, and each tends to have their own specialties.

"We like to walk around and stop at a tapa bar and have a drink and some fried squid and peppers," said Personnelman Seaman Gabriela Nicolescu, from Rota's Personnel Support Detachment. "My favorite tapa is the *pimienta fritos* or fried peppers."



**Above** – At Regional Headquarters Southern Europe in Naples, Italy, Italian soldiers and other foreign military members await the morning call to colors, so they can raise NATO's 18 nation flags.

**Right** – Narrow alleys and side roads bustle with life in Naples.

order one brand's parts, and maintenance personnel only need to be familiar with that type of unit versus half a dozen different kinds like we have now."

Not nearly as complete as NII, SIG 2.1 has a ways to go with its completion slated for 2009. By then, Sailors there will benefit from more than 23 new projects; one of which is called MEGA III, a complex that houses a recreation and fitness facility, a dining hall, a chapel, administration and security offices, a telecommunications center and a community building.

Folks currently stationed at the Mediterranean hub are





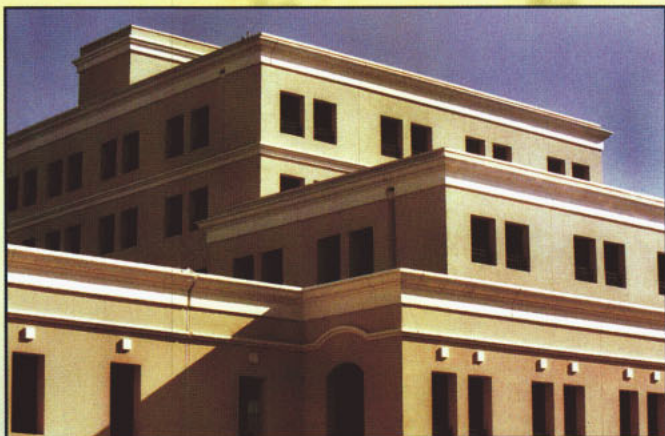
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### What about the family?

Cultural exposure, such as food, is one reason military families choose duty in Europe. For the Dungs, preparing for their tour in Italy meant getting their kids adjusted ahead of time. Schonna had bought language videotapes for the kids, and now her daughter proudly recites *pomodoro pollo* (Italian for tomato and chicken) because, said Caila, "Mommy got us a movie."

Families end up staying in Europe due to their

perception of safer surroundings. "The DODDs schools are safer, and the local communities are safer for our children," explained Navy Element Command Master Chief Bruno Capista, who has spent 14 years of his naval career in Italy. While Italy and other European locations share the same petty crimes seen in the United States, violent crimes are extremely rare.



**Left** – Elements of the new bachelor quarters (BQ) at Naval Support Activity Naples mimic the surrounding European architecture.

**Below** – During a USO day-trip of the Almaf Coast, ITSN Crystal Campos and IT3 Amanda Mancuso, both on their first Navy tour at Comander Fleet Air Mediterranean, are awed by the Italian region's postcard beauty.



already excited as they see the early stages of construction. "I wish I could stay longer to see it all," said UT2(SCW) Leroy Brisco, who currently works at NAS II sewage treatment facility. Of his unsung but vital service to new and old buildings alike, he added, "If folks don't know we're back here, we're doing an outstanding job."

On and off duty, re-capitalization is improving the quality of service for Sailors in Europe. A new carrier pier and refueling station at NSA Souda Bay provides more efficient fleet support for battle groups on deployment in the region. A new postal and supply warehouse with flightline access at Capo helps Sailors better move mail and material

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## The places you can go

Religious Programs Specialist 3rd Class Michael Nutt is discovering life in Italy is "way different" from his small hometown of Pembine, Wis. "I love it; I picked it here," said Nutt of his first three months in Europe. He's told his mom repeatedly, during their bi-weekly phone calls, that he hopes to either get a

new BMW automobile while stationed in Italy or to get married. "I'm surrounded by magazine covers," he declared of the many beautiful Italian women he's seen. Nutt hopes to find romance in the canalled-city of Venice. If not for love, he'll go because of the low cost, he exclaimed, "I can afford it from here!"

**Above** – Heavy equipment and hydraulic cranes are common sights at the Gricignano Support Site in Naples. Buildings like the new Exchange and commissary are due to open in 2004.

**Right** – EOCN James Brett, of NMCB-40, levels the site for a new sports complex at Naval Air Station Sigonella. Seabees are building complete projects and assisting host contractors at many other new construction sites, saving funds and ensuring proper standards are met.

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to ships overseas. And a new passenger terminal at Sigonella serves the thousands of military personnel and their families who PCS through the Mediterranean and on to the Middle East.

"The value of Sailors stationed here [in Europe], and the service they provide, is huge," stated COMFAIRMED Force Master Chief Marty Kidder. He added that for





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The Dungans plan on taking advantage of the central location in Europe that Naples provides. An 8 to 10 hour drive and they can be at the Austrian border. A little further, and they'll visit Germany. "When we got married, I promised my wife I would show her the world," noted Dungan. "It took me nine years and joining the Navy, but now I can do that."

## International Experience

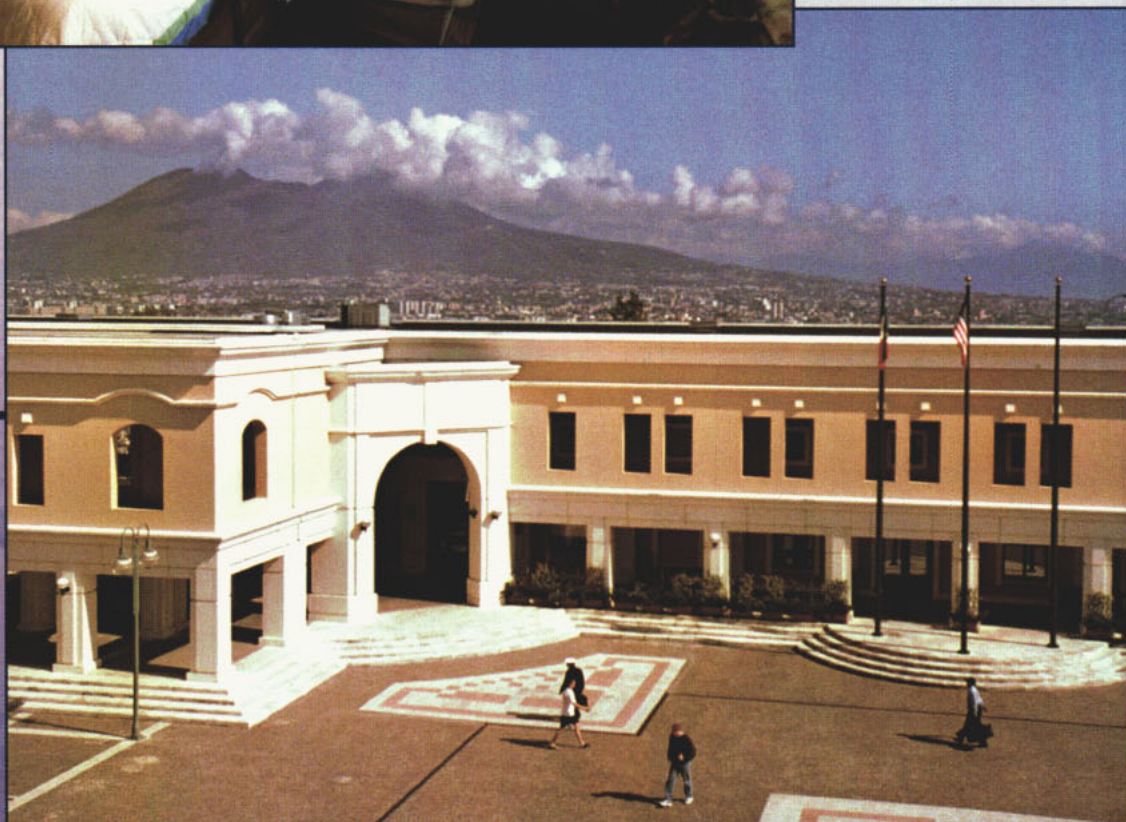
Traveling is not the only way many Sailors see Europe. Day-in and day-out, they work side-by-side with their counterparts from other militaries. One way this is done is by serving in a NATO billet.

"Music is the international language," claimed Master Chief Musician (AW) Manuel Rivera-Cepeda, assigned to the Regional Headquarters Allied Forces Southern Europe band in Naples.



**Left** – With her room decorated with stuffed cows, MSSA Blaine Garver, assigned to Naval Support Activity Naples bachelor quaters staff, appreciates the private/semi-private arrangement of her new 1-plus-1 room.

**Below** – With Mount Vesuvius in the background, Naval Support Activity Naples has recently been remodeled in an Italian style to blend with the host country environment.



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"Allegro, forte ... it's the same in all languages."

Musician 3rd Class Benjamin Kelly adds, "The Greeks and Italians bring their music to the table, and we learn their customs like their holiday music."

For others, it is about serving where the action is. "We could hear the mortar rounds 10 to 15 clicks away," recalled Yeoman 2nd Class Stephen Russel, a four-year NATO veteran assigned to Striking Forces South who served in the Balkans. "In Kosovo, Croatia, ... seeing the mission operations first hand — that's the experience."

## Positive Attitude

Regardless of what you intend to gain from your tour in Europe — career or travel, having positive expectations of your host country is paramount. "At first, I didn't like the culture," said high school freshman Jon Till, who attends Stephen Decatur High at NAS Sigonella. "But now, I know it's how they live, and I can appreciate it." He added that coming to that healthy understanding, "has been pretty cool."

Information Systems Specialist 3rd Class Amanda Mancuso, of COMFAIRMED, echoed the same sentiment. "I hated it at



**Above** — NATO duty is one option for Sailors wanting to serve in Europe and work alongside their foreign military counterparts.

**Right** — LCDR Rich Rutkowski, of COMFAIRMED, strolls the tree-lined plaza at NSA Naples with daughter, Robin, and son, Ryan. Having a new child development center, mini-mart, movie theater and food court all in walking distance from work proves very convenient to many Sailors and their families.

personnel to do their jobs and live accordingly requires the infrastructure investment the Navy is now making. "Without the military and civilian personnel at our bases in the region, the Navy would need, at least, another battle group in the area to get the job done."

NII and SIG 2.1 aren't alone in improving quality of service to the fleet. Re-capitalization at Naval Station Rota, Spain, is still in the planning stages, and it looks to reduce the U.S. footprint on the joint Spanish base while enhancing mission function. The \$200 million vision calls for the demolition of 120 buildings and the construction of nearly 30 new structures, including

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first, but it has grown on me," she remarked of her year and a half in Italy. Like many, Mancuso was able to discover family roots in Europe, visiting relatives in Sicily for the first time. "We communicated even though I didn't know Italian. I'll never forget it."

You don't have to know the language, but it certainly helps. However, with the right European state of mind, you can have an adventure, your Navy journey can continue and you'll be living

large in the acceleration lane — but, it just might be on the other side of the road! ☑

For more information on European duty, check out the following web site: [www.dutyeurope.navy.mil](http://www.dutyeurope.navy.mil)

*Desilets is the managing editor and Ingle is a photojournalist for All Hands.*



**Above** — At the end of a memorable tour, the Feliciano family enjoys one of their last Italian meals before leaving NAS Sigonella, Sicily.

## Leave Your Shoes at the Gate

a new command operations center, exchange, commissary and school along with improvements to the port facility.

As "new" as naval bases across Europe are, and will become, folks may be prompted to take off their shoes and leave them at the gate when they arrive. It may not be a local custom or tradition, but it could be the rule set by new owners, the Sailors, to appease that certain feeling. ☑

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*Top* – Forty-five minutes south of Naval Support Activity (NSA) Naples, Vietri is a great place for Sailors to escape from the big city hustle and bustle and relax in the tranquil small seaside town.

*Above* – Sunlight pours through the spring thunderclouds to accent some of Italy's famed sculpture.

*Left* – Ceramics are a major source of income for many of the locals in Italy. Sailors often leave their host nation with hundreds of dollars worth of vases, bowls and plates.